

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA
ITEM NO

HOUSING COMMITTEE

9

10 SEPTEMBER 2019

Report Title	TENANT SATISFACTION (STAR) SURVEY RESULTS
Purpose of Report	<p>To present members with the results of two tenant satisfaction surveys; one for sheltered housing tenants and one for a selection of general needs tenants. Both surveys were carried out between February and April 2019 by ARP Research, an independent organisation.</p> <p>To compare survey results with the previous 2015 surveys, and those of social housing providers of a similar size and type.</p> <p>To provide analysis of the results which a) validate the decision to bring the repairs and maintenance service in-house and, b) may inform future improvements to tenancy management</p>
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to note the Tenant Satisfaction (STAR) Survey Results Report
Consultation and Feedback	The 2019 survey results and follow up work will be fed back to tenants through Keynotes, Stroud Council's Housing Facebook page and SDC website.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, however, any potential changes to services will need to be costed and included in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and 30 Year Plan.</p> <p>Lucy Clothier, Interim Accountancy Manager Tel: 01453 754343 Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Legal Implications	<p>There are no legal implications arising from this report</p> <p>Patrick Arran, Interim Head of Legal Services Tel: 01453 754369 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Report Author	Christine Welsh – Projects Officer Tel: 01453 754164 Email: christine.welsh@stroud.gov.uk
Options	None
Performance Management Follow Up	These survey findings will be used to help SDC improve services and increase tenant satisfaction levels over time.

1. Background

- 1.1 Tenant Services periodically undertake a tenant and resident satisfaction survey (STAR), a) to find out how tenants perceive our services and, b) to satisfy our regulatory obligations as a social landlord. The survey findings allow us to see what's working well in comparison with previous years so that we can identify what needs to change and improve. Our tenant satisfaction rates are also compared with similar landlords.

- 1.2 The survey was conducted independently by ARP Research, an independent company, and took place earlier this year (between February and May). Postal surveys were sent to all sheltered tenants and a randomly selected sample of 2,300 general needs tenants.
- 1.3 In total, 294 sheltered tenants (41% response rate) and 540 general needs tenants took part in the survey (23% response rate). We attribute the particularly disappointing general needs response rate, in part, to sole reliance on postal methods to conduct the survey rather than by electronic means (email and SMS messaging). This issue will be resolved by the imminent updating of the Tenancy Agreement which will address GDPR regulations.
- 1.4 Satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service varied considerably between the perceptions of sheltered tenants and general needs. Sheltered, ratings were similar to 2015's and identical to the HouseMark benchmark median. Satisfaction of general needs tenants however, dropped from 79% v 70%. Repairs satisfaction contrasted very poorly in the southern part of the district against the northern part. Further breakdown of the results reveals high satisfaction rates with
i) ease of reporting a repair, while ratings were 92% and 81% respectively for ii) how it was dealt with.
Experience of the repairs appointments system (being given an appointment, at a preferred time and having an appointment kept) had a notable impact on how respondents perceived the repairs service overall. Sheltered tenants' ratings were relatively high whereas general needs tenants were far less satisfied. The appointments system was a common suggestion for improvement. Satisfaction with the last completed repair was generally high. There was a high level of satisfaction with each of the six aspects of the last completed repair. However, 'information given on the progress of work' and 'Time taken to complete the repair once it started' had the lowest scores and is something to take note of - being one of the best predictors of satisfaction. Satisfaction with in-house gas servicing is still high; even gaining a higher percentage of 'very satisfied' responses from sheltered tenants.
- 1.5 Satisfaction with our customer service and the general handling of enquiries hasn't changed significantly overall for sheltered tenants, but in the case of general needs ratings dropped to 73% from 78%. The council therefore remains in the bottom quartile of landlords.
72% general needs tenants and 85% sheltered said their queries were answered within 10 working days (was previously 85% in both cases). 30% said that a full explanation of the query outcome was not provided. These two aspects of customer service had a strong relationship with other customer service satisfaction scores. Getting a satisfactory response when reporting issues and, within the 10 day timeframe, is thus key to getting this area of the service right.
In terms of demographic differences, older general needs tenants (65+) were significantly more satisfied than average with the way enquiries were handled (87%). In contrast, those aged 16-34 were significantly less satisfied (52%), as were those aged 35-54 (71%).
47% of sheltered respondents are internet users (10% increase from 2015). The most common method of accessing the internet was via pc or tablet.

71% of general needs tenants use the internet. Of those, 39% were aged 65+, 94% were aged 35-64 and 89% were under 35. Smartphones were, by and large, the most commonly used appliance to access the internet.

Information via letter remains the most valued communications channel, followed by telephone. However, there was a notable shift in those preferring contact by email.

- 1.6 Information and resident involvement - Keeping tenants informed is a key driver of satisfaction and a theme across the results. Indeed, communication and information seems to be a theme throughout the results.

Sheltered tenants' satisfaction with being kept informed about the things that affect tenants was virtually the same at 73%, while that of general needs' tenants was down from 80% to 72%.

57% sheltered tenants were satisfied with how well the council listens to tenants' views and acts upon them (was 61%), while general needs tenants was 58%, (previously 64%) –below the benchmark of 69% for other landlords.

No significant change in the percentage of respondents who were satisfied with opportunities to make their views known.

As with many other survey results, younger tenants were far less positive than the 85% of over 65s that rated the council's information as good. However, the very youngest respondents aged 34 or under were actually slightly more satisfied, at 71%, than those aged 35-64 (68%).

The vast majority of tenants value Keynotes. One in ten sheltered tenants would prefer receiving it electronically. 17% of general needs tenants prefer an electronic copy; many of whom were among the under 35s (40%), while 3% were over 65.

Just over a quarter of respondents wanted to know more about getting involved.

- 1.7 Home and scheme (24 schemes) - The vast majority of sheltered tenants were satisfied with the quality of home 90% (broadly in line with 2015's score of 92%) and the rating for the condition of the scheme 81% (no different from 2015).

Satisfaction rates in relation to the appearance of schemes dropped from 84% to 81%. A statistic influenced by the low ratings for grounds maintenance service (69% was 78%) and cleaning of external communal areas (66% was 75%). Those living in flats were more satisfied than those living in bungalows with both the quality of their home (92% v 88%) and the general condition of the scheme (82% v 80%).

47% of respondents use their scheme's communal lounge. Those who use the communal lounges tend to be more satisfied with the scheme facilities and services.

81% general needs are satisfied with the home (a key priority for tenants). This score has remained stable since 2008 and is broadly in line with similar landlords.

In contrast, satisfaction with cleaning of communal areas has dropped. Internal cleaning from 66% to 46%, whilst external cleaning dropped from 68% to 42%

- 1.8 There was a significant drop statistically, in satisfaction with neighbourhood as a place to live (83% v 87%), with the appearance of neighbourhoods having strongly influenced this score - there is a considerably lower level of satisfaction with the grounds maintenance service.

Top issues viewed to be more of a significant problem since 2015 include rubbish or litter, where general needs ratings had dropped from 79% to 72%), and more sheltered tenants (18%) said it was a problem (was 10%). Other issues viewed to be more of a problem than in 2015, were dog fouling, drug use/dealing and drunk or rowdy behaviour.

1.9 Improved results (sheltered respondents) for dealing with ASB (although sample sizes were very small) are now above the benchmark median scores from other landlords. For instance, there's a 48% satisfaction rate for the response overall to ASB complaints, (was 30%) and the ARP benchmark median of 36%.

Dealing with Anti-social behaviour is seen as being one of the top five priority services they received from the council and influences wider satisfaction. Respondents who have experienced an incident of ASB in the previous year increased by a small percentage (2% and 3%) with 62% sheltered and 53% general needs tenants reporting it directly to the council.

Once general needs respondents have reported ASB, their experiences have not compared favourably with 2015 results. However, there are complexities in dealing with ASB and it should be noted that questions that ask how reports are handled typically receive lower ratings than many other question types in surveys. Furthermore, due to the small sample sizes involved throughout, care should be taken when interpreting results throughout this section.

2 CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

Repairs and maintenance - Work is going into bringing the repairs and maintenance service in-house for next April 2020. Planning includes improvements to the appointments system that tenants get an appropriate repairs appointment, at the tenant's preferred time and reduce the time taken to complete a repair once it has started.

Sheltered schemes - A dedicated member of staff, Community Hub Facilitator will work with tenants in each sheltered scheme and external partners to support, develop and devise initiatives for a community hub such as tenant surgeries and social activities.

Communications - To improve communications, Tenant Services will continue improving ICT systems and processes to support staff in the improvement of customer service. This includes tackling ease of communicating with the right person, appointments and keeping tenants informed of how their query is progressing should the task require more than 10 working days to resolve.

Tenant involvement - We will contact all those respondents who said they would be interested in getting involved and continue to recruit volunteers to increase tenant engagement.

Neighbourhood and Scheme as a place to live - We are modifying our approach to the recycling service and working with Community Services on solutions that are appropriate for each estate. Given budgetary constraints, this will have to be a long-term project, entailing a phased approach (on an estate by estate basis). Such modifications have already been successfully established at Bearlands in Wotton under Edge. Plans are currently being drawn up for Paganhill in Stroud, Lower Kingshill in Dursley and Draycott in Cam.

We will review our communal cleaning and grounds maintenance service standard in conjunction with Community Services to ensure improvements.

Local tenants, leaseholders and councillors will be invited to estate walkabouts with Neighbourhood Management Officers (NMOs) and our partner organisations to assist us in tackling issues arising from Anti Social Behaviour.